

receiving those items of the plurality of mail items that are returned as being undeliverable; and
scanning and processing the encoded data on the items of undeliverable mail.

2. The method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 1 wherein the step of encoding data includes placing an optically encoded barcode on each of the plurality of mail items.
7. The method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 1 wherein the step of scanning the encoded data on the undeliverable mail includes reading an optically encoded barcode on each item and decoding the barcode to determine the identification information associated with an intended recipient of the item.
9. The method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 8 further comprising the step of transmitting the generated output file to a mailing address service provider in order to obtain a different address for each intended recipient of an undeliverable mail item.
10. A method for processing returned mail items sent by a subscriber to a recipient, the returned mail items incorporating encoded identification information, the method comprising the steps of:
collecting the returned mail items at a processing location;
reading the encoded information from the returned mail items;

electronically gathering updated information including a different address of the intended recipient; and

electronically transmitting updated information to the subscriber for updating of a subscriber's address database.

11. The method for processing returned mail items of claim 10 wherein the encoded information is placed in an optically encoded barcode on each of the plurality of mail items.
16. The method for processing returned mail items of claim 10 wherein the step of reading the encoded information includes scanning an optically encoded barcode on each item and decoding the barcode to determine identification information associated with the intended recipient of the item.
18. The method for processing returned mail items of claim 17 further comprising the step of transmitting the generated output file to a mailing address service provider in order to obtain a different address for each intended recipient of an undeliverable mail item.
19. A computer readable medium containing a computer program product for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items, the computer program product comprising:
 - program instructions that capture optically scanned encoded data including identification information on each item of undeliverable mail;
 - program instructions that store the captured optically scanned data in a data file;

program instructions that update the stored data to reflect a different address of the intended recipient of each item of undeliverable mail; and
program instructions that transmit the updated stored data to a subscriber in electronic form to update the address files of the subscriber.

20. The computer program product for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 19 wherein the encoded data is placed in an optically encoded barcode on each mail item.
22. The computer program product for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 19 wherein the encoded identification information includes a name and current address associated with the intended recipient of the mail item.
23. The computer program product for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 19 further comprising program instructions that transmit the stored data file electronically to a mailing address service provider in order to obtain a different address for each intended recipient of an undeliverable mail item.
24. A system for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items comprising:
a scanner for reading optically encoded data that includes identification information on each item of undeliverable mail;

a processor for operation of a computer program for capturing the identification information in the encoded data and writing the identification information into a data file; and
a database for storing the data file containing identification information.

25. The system for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 24 wherein the computer program includes instructions that update the stored data in the data file with a different address associated with each of the undeliverable mail items.
26. The system for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 24 wherein the computer program [product] includes instructions that deliver the updated stored data to a subscriber in electronic form for use in updating the address files of the subscriber.
27. The system for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 24 wherein the optically encoded data contains a two-dimensional bar code.

Please add the following new claims.

28. The method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 1, wherein the step of processing encoded data comprises the steps of:
storing the encoded data in a data file;
updating the stored data to correct the address of each intended recipient of the items of undeliverable mail; and

delivering the updated data to a subscriber for use in updating the mailing address files of the subscriber.

29. The method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 1, wherein the identification information encoded on each mail item includes a name and current address associated with an intended recipient of the mail item.
30. The method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 2, wherein the optically encoded bar code is placed on either the front side or the back side of each mail item.
31. The method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 2, wherein the optically encoded bar code is placed in a return address section on each of the plurality of mail items.
32. The method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 11, wherein the optically encoded bar code is placed on either the front side or the back side of each mail item.
33. The method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 11, wherein the optically encoded bar code is placed in a return address section on each of the plurality of mail items.